

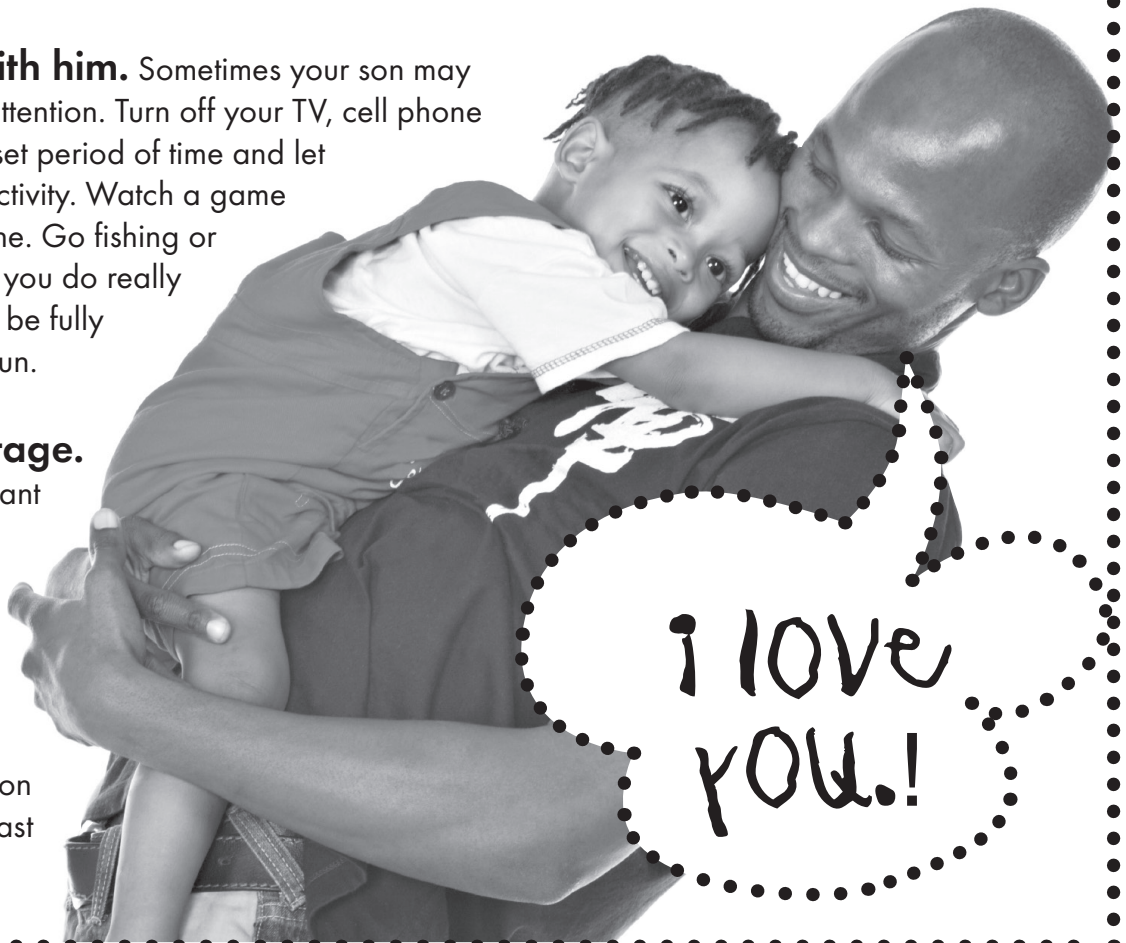
Fathers and Sons

Building and Maintaining a Special Bond

Most boys want to be just like their dads when they grow up, but more important than wanting to "be" them is the longing to be with them.

If you're a father who is lucky enough to have a son, follow these steps to make sure you enjoy every moment of this opportunity:

- **Be a guide.** Let your son know you value his feelings. Try not to compare your childhood to his and insist that he follow in your footsteps; instead, teach him – and model for him – honesty, fairness, respect for others and hard work – skills that will serve him well whatever path he chooses.
- **Take an active role in his activities.** Maybe you've always dreamed your son would be the quarterback of the football team, but he's interested in something totally different. Accept your child for who he is and support his interests. If he joins a band, attend his performances. If he chooses a sport other than your favorite, root for him at every game. If he is artistic, enroll him in classes and applaud his creations. Remind him through your support that he is loved, no matter what.
- **Spend time with him.** Sometimes your son may simply want your attention. Turn off your TV, cell phone or computer for a set period of time and let him choose your activity. Watch a game together or play one. Go fishing or take a walk. What you do really doesn't matter; just be fully present and have fun.
- **Enjoy every stage.** If your son is an infant or toddler, "daddy time" still matters. Cuddle him, sing songs to him or help him learn his ABCs. Your bond should begin as soon as he is born and last forever.



BUILDING AND MAINTAINING A SPECIAL BOND

Daddy & Daughter



The relationship between a father and daughter is special.

If a father is involved in his daughter's life, he is the first man she loves and learns to adore. She looks up to him for affection, guidance and protection, and his presence often helps her avoid negative choices.

Make a commitment to be involved in your daughter's life, whether you live with her or see her on rare occasions. Even if she can't tell you, she needs you!

Here are ways to strengthen your father-daughter bond:

- * **Talk to her and with her.** Dads don't always understand their daughters' moods or actions, but your willingness to listen and ask questions about what she finds important will show her she is valued. Let your daughter know she can tell you anything, but don't pry.
- * **Take an active role in her activities.** Coach her sports team, go to her school activities, cheer her on in whatever interests her, and be her biggest fan.
- * **Show her how women should be treated.** Take her on father-daughter outings, and be mindful of how you treat other women when she's around,

especially her mother or your significant other. You are your daughter's best example of who she should pick as a future partner, and research shows that girls often date or marry men who display attitudes or actions similar to their father's.

- * **Be sure she knows you'll always be there for her, whatever her age or stage of development, and keep that promise.** Hold her often if she's a baby and tell her she's special. Share books with her if she's preschool age or help her learn to ride a bike or fly a kite. Even when you discipline her, she should know that your love is unconditional.

A dad who follows these rules throughout his daughter's childhood will build a lasting bond and a lifetime of special memories.

